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The Duty and Advantages of doing Good.

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S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the
Abbey CHURCH
I N

St. Albans in Hertfordshire,
J U L Y 22. 1716.

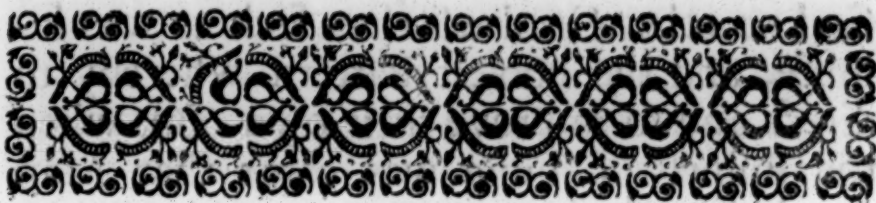
On OCCASION of the CHARITY
SCHOOL establish'd in that BOROUGH.

By PAWLET St. JOHN, A. M.
Rector of YELDEN, and Chaplain in
Ordinary to Her late Majesty Queen ANNE of
ever blessed Memory.

*Publisch'd at the Request of the Worshipful the Mayor,
the Aldermen, and the Trustees for the said*
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ACTS X. xxxviii.

— *Who went about doing Good,*



AS it is the great Design of the Christian Religion, by a closer Imitation of God in this Life, to carry us on to the more perfect Enjoyment of him in another, so of all the glorious Attributes which do eminently conspire to the Fulness of the Deity, there is none that shines so adorable in God, and withal so attainable by Man, as his Love, his Mercy, and the generous Satisfaction he takes in *doing Good*.

Of this God left *not himself without a Witness*, even amidst the rudest Ignorance of the Heathen World; *the Rain from Heaven*, and the *fruitful Seasons*, and all the common Mercies of his Providence, with which he *did them good*, confessed not more the *Existence* than the *Bounty* of their Almighty Benefactor, whilst from the legible Characters of Love and Mercy which lay every where scatter'd

The Duty and Advantages

over all his Works, they could ascribe unto God no other Goodness than such as was infinite, and the noblest Pattern whereby to direct and to improve their own. But when the Fulness of Time was come that Man should be restor'd to the Image of his Maker, that Man might become more like unto God, God himself was pleased to become like unto Man, then did the great Original of Goodness it self come down from Heaven to dwell amongst us, to shine in his full Force and Lustre upon our Souls, and by the most familiar Instances of his Love to us to instruct us in the noblest Expressions of our own to others.

He came not therefore in the Thundrings and the Lightnings, and all the solemn Terrors of his Majesty, in which the *Jews* expected him to appear; mistaken People! in the *Wind* and the *Earthquake* only to look for him which was to come ——— God was all the while *in the small still Voice*, silently employ'd in his proper Work of *doing Good*, a Work most highly becoming the SAVIOUR of the World, who came not to shake and to confound, but to relieve and to restore it, whose Business was not to alarm our Fear, but to engage our Love.

Matt. xx. 28. He came not therefore *to be ministred unto*, but *to minister*, himself expos'd to the Hunger, the Thirst, and the Pains which he reliev'd in others, and to all the common Hardships and

of doing G O O D.

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and Infirmities of human Life, all but the Sins he cover'd, and the Iniquities he forgave.

But even under these, the closest Disguises of his Humanity, when all the other Characters of the Deity were retir'd behind the Vail, when even his *Wisdom* and his *Power* it self seem'd unwilling to appear, unless when summon'd to obey his *Love*, even then did his Goodness maintain it's original Lustre, and was gloriously *manifested in the Flesh*; his *Light* brake thro' the Cloud that cover'd it, and so shone before Men, that they might see his good Works, and from a new Example learn now to be merciful, not only as their Father in Heaven, but as his Son on Earth was Merciful. Mat. v. 16.
Luke vi. 36.

In discoursing to you on these Words, I shall beg leave to take Occasion.

1st. To show you, what Obligations we have in general as *Men*, and in particular as *Christians*, to the great Duty of *doing Good*.

2^{dly}, I shall give you a general Direction or two from our Saviour's Example, about the manner of performing it.

3^{dly}, By proposing some of the Principal Encouragements to this Duty, I shall endeavour to perswade you to the Practice of it : And

4^{thly},

4thly, I shall beg your Patience whilst I speak a Word or two in the last Place, to the Business and Design of this particular Solemnity.

1st. Then, I am to show you, what Obligations we have in general as we are *Men*, and in particular as we are *Christians*, to the great Duty of *doing Good*.

To do Good therefore, is an Action so highly perfective of the Nature it employs, that God Almighty seems to have taken a more than ordinary Care to make it Necessary in the World, and chuses rather to let us smart under the Hardships and Miseries we complain of, than want convenient Opportunities of performing it.

Had indeed our Heavenly Father, from whom every good and perfect Gift descends, bestow'd them all in full and equal Measure on his Creatures, so that none should want in any thing, but *all abound in all*; had all been equally Wise, and Rich, and Fortunate, and Great, there had no room then been left for Charity, We could neither have practis'd the most excellent of Vertues our Selves, nor found Employment for that of others. But now that God, by *dividing to every Man severally as he will*, to some More, to others Less, *to every one somewhat to profit withal*, hath, *so temper'd the whole*
 Body

Body together, that the Abundance of some may supply the Want of others, the Members now must have the same care one of another, and each of them (each of them I say, for even those which seem to be most feeble are necessary) in their respective Stations conspire to the Welfare of the whole.

And indeed of all the manifold Gifts of God committed to our Charge, *We know no good there is in any of them, save only what it takes from doing it; without this, Power would presently swell into Tyranny, and Wisdom it self Degenerate into Fraud: So impossible is it for them to continue excellent in Themselves, when once they cease to become beneficial unto others.*

Out of our Goodness therefore hath God prepar'd for the Poor and the Needy, the Miserable, and the Unfortunate: And their Debtors sure We are, plac'd only as Elder Brothers in our Father's House, possess'd indeed of the Estate, but Charg'd with the Maintenance of the Family. And altho' our Heavenly Father has not thought fit to rate our Liberality by a particular Assessment, but to make it the more our Vertue, has left it to our selves, to settle the Proportion of it, yet to the End that the Poor might not always be forgotten, that the patient abiding of the Needy might not perish for ever: He has graciously made over our very Nature it self for their Security, engag'd the most tender of our Passions

Passions in their behalf, and arm'd their Sighs and their Tears with an irresistible Violence. The same Bowels therefore, that inform us of our own Necessities, generously provoke us to relieve our Brother's too, so that a Man must first *be cruel to his own Flesh*; before he can bring himself to be unmerciful to others. So loudly does our very Nature plead within us for the Fatherless and the Widow, *the Poor, and him that hath none to help*: So strongly does it engage us, *For our Brethren and Companion's sake, to wish them prosperity*. How much more then, for the sake of Christ himself, for the sake of *the Lord our God*, must *We seek to do them Good*?

A Duty this, my Brethren, which we Christians are of all Men most solemnly engag'd to practise, if the Doctrine of our Master carry any Authority at all on those for whom He preach'd it, His Example and Influence on those for whom He liv'd; or his Love on those for whom He died.

And 1st. For his Doctrine——

The Religion He hath left behind him in the World, consists not in dry Formalities, and useless Speculations; No, it is a *Faith which worketh by Love*, that employs it self in the substantial Offices of *doing Good*; Duties *more pleasing and acceptable unto God*, because *more profitable and beneficial unto Men*. A new Commandment therefore have we

Gal. v. 6.

John xiii.
34.

we from Him, *that We Love one another*, a new Commandment, both in the Degree of it's Perfection, and in the Largeness of it's Extent.

The Charity of other Men perhaps of a *Jew*, it may be, or a *Gentile*, may satisfy it self with a cheap Wish, or an unprofitable Compassion, may think it enough to say to a *Brother or a Sister naked and destitute of daily food, Depart in Peace, be ye warm'd and fill'd,* Jam. ii. 15. without ever giving them *those things which be needful for the Body*: But the Charity of the Gospel, like it's *Faith*, without good *Works*, is Jam. ii. 17. *Dead*; not content with the faint Expressions of it's kindness in Word only and in Tongue, it generously goes on to make it self felt in Deed, and in Truth, and carries us out beyond the cold Comfort of bare pitying only to an actual Relieving of the Wants, and Alleviating the Misfortunes of our Brethren.

It was commanded it is true to *them of old* Mat. v. 43. *Time to Love their Neighbour*, but allow'd withal to *Hate their Enemy* too: But to whom did the Law of Nature, or that of *Moses* say Mat. v. 44. *at any time, Love your Enemies, Bless them that Curse you, do Good to them that Hate you, and Pray for them which Dispitefully use you, and Persecute you.* No; This was a Perfection Entirely reserv'd to Christianity alone, an Height to which no Disciples, but those of Christ, could ever rise: For none sure could

Luke vii.
47.

Rom. xiii.
8.

ever Love so much, but they to whom so much had been forgiven.

He that Loveth another (saith St. Paul) Hath fullfill'd the Law. A gracious Commandment sure, an easie Performance this! Lord! what is Man, that thou art thus mindful of Him, or the Son of Man, that thou so regardest Him? Thus to join the Duty of Loving our Neighbour, so close to that of Loving Thee! To make it the Second Commandment of thy Law, so very like unto the First, that the best, the only Way of Obeying the One, is to fulfil the Other! Nay, in some Sense to make the Second Commandment even greater than the First, by changing the most costly Sacrifices We can offer up to Thee, into the more grateful Incense of Mercy to thy Creatures!

With such Oblations as these it is that Christ declares himself well pleas'd; the only Sacrifices indeed, by which we may in any sort become profitable unto Him: As for Himself, He is long since Ascended back into his Heaven again, exalted there as far above the Charity, as the Necessities of his Creatures: But the Poor We have always with us; to these our Goodness might at all Times extend, To these the Members of his Body, the Partakers of his Nature, to these the liveliest Representatives of his Person, because Partakers of his Afflictions too.

Ye therefore that have *this World's Goods*, and see your *Brother have need*, and yet un-^{1 Jam. iii. 17.}mov'd at his Sighs, and regardless of his Tears, *shut up your Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in you?* Beware ungrateful Sinners, 'tis God, 'tis Christ himself that asks your Charity: 'Tis he that in the Person of his *Lazarus* lies perishing at your Gate: 'Tis he is *an hungred*, and ye gave him *no Meat*, 'tis he is *Thirsty*, and ye gave him *no Drink*; 'tis he is the *Stranger*, and ye ^{Mat. xxv.}take him *not in*, *Naked*, and ye *cloath him not*, *Sick and in Prison*, and ye *visit him not*: *In as much as ye do it not unto the least of these his Brethren*, ye *do it not unto him*.

But we shall find still further Obligation to the Duty I am speaking of, if we consider

2dly, The Example also of our Master in this particular, who (as we find him described by the Apostle in my Text) *went about doing Good*.

Of almost Forty Years, which he vouchsafed to pass amongst us in this lower World, he scarce allow'd himself so many Days for his Retirement from it. From his Entrance on the Ministry, his Life was always publick, and in a Crowd, himself continually press'd and throng'd with the *Lame*, and the *Blind*, the *Miserable*, and the *Unfortunate*, sought after by Multitudes, and *seeking*, where he was *not sought*. Of the many Thousands that daily flock'd about him from every Quarter

to implore his Mercy, what Beggar was ever so unhappy as to ask in vain? When was he ever known to *send* the poor Wretch *empty away*, without either forgiving his Sins, or healing his Infirmities, or releasing him from both? The mighty Works which his Father had anointed him with Power to perform, were all of such a Nature, as seem'd not so much contriv'd for the Surprize, as the Benefit of those that saw them. It was the Work of some to feed the Hungry, and to heal the Sick, of others to cast out Devils, and to raise the Dead, of all to convince the Ignorant, and reclaim the Infidel. Thus liv'd the best Man that ever came into the World, it's publick Friend, it's universal Benefactor, *going about*, and as *he went*, scattering the Blessings, and dispensing *the Gifts he had received for Men*. And now *greater love than this* could *no Man* sure express, save only by dying for them too: He dy'd for them too, and as freely lay'd down his Life for the Redemption, as he had before employ'd it in the Service of the World.

And now what a charming Original, what an engaging Pattern is here of doing Good? Enough, methinks, to command the Wonder of an Heathen, or a Jew, Persons the most disinterested in our Saviour's Charity, and insensible of it's Benefits: How much more then the Imitation of a Christian, who is himself the happy Object of his Redeemer's Love,

Love, and one amazing Instance of the Goodness he adores? especially too when this is the only *Reward* we can give unto the Lord for all the *Benefits* he hath done unto us, when it is to be grateful to the best of Friends in the Way which he himself hath appointed us. *I have given you an Example*, says he, John xiii: *that ye should do to others even as I have done* 15. *unto you*: And it is the natural Inference his own beloved Disciple makes from his Love to us, *that if God so loved us, we ought also to* 1 John iv. *love one another.* 11.

But who alas! O merciful Jesus, who can pretend to imitate the mighty *Labour* of thy *Love*? We are far, very far sure, from valuing it as we ought, if we can ever hope to love one another as thou hast loved us, nor indeed dost thou require thus much of us; it is not expected we should be doing Good to the World just in the same surprising Instances and astonishing Manner that our Saviour did; it is not requir'd that the same *Power*, it is enough that the *same Mind* only be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, the same Readiness, as we have Opportunity, to do Good unto all Men; and Opportunity of doing Good is what the poorest Man alive can never want, God having taken effectual Care that a Virtue so highly beneficial to all should not be found impracticable by any.

He

He that is not able, for instance, to relieve the Hunger, nor cloath the Nakedness, nor administer to the Temporal Necessities of his Brother (tho', blessed be God, this is the Case of very few amongst us) such an one may yet find Employment enough for his Charity (the noblest part indeed of Charity) in *satisfying an hungry Soul with Goodness*; he may instruct the Ignorant and reprove the Guilty, and without a Miracle give Eyes to the Blindness of their Understanding and Feet to the Lameness of their Will; or *lastly*, by the Efficacy of his Prayers and the Virtue of his Example (and these sure are things always in our Power) the poorest Man alive may yet become *rich in good Works*, and in the truest Sense a publick Friend and Benefactor to the World.

But before I dismiss this Head of Discourse, give me leave to recommend to you Two Things more especially observable in our Saviour's Manner of doing Good, and not improper therefore to direct us in our own. And the

1st of these is the unwearied Perseverance of his Love, notwithstanding all the Discouragements it met with from the outrageous Malice of an ungrateful World.

How was his Doctrine despis'd by those it labour'd to instruct? How were his Miracles blasphem'd by those they offer'd to restore?

restore? How was his very Person it self insulted and abus'd, and what Extremities of Cruelty did it not endure at the Hands of those for whom he suffer'd, nay, for whose Sakes alone he was made capable of suffering? A glorious Conflict this betwixt the Goodness of G O D and the Ingratitude of Men! but such as serv'd only to distinguish the Triumphs of our Saviour's Love, and make it *perfect* thro' *the Sufferings* it endur'd; the *Sin* and the Ingratitude that did *so much abound*, serv'd only to let us see how *much more the Love* and the Mercy that forgave it could *abound*.

And how does a serious Contemplation of these Things, my Brethren, at once recommend the Fervency of our Saviour's Love, and reproach at the same time the Coldness of our own! Ours alas! which on every slight Occasion, on every puny Quarrel, presently cools into Indifferency, or fires into Revenge.

As often as we remember the exceeding great Love of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in laying down his Life for us, for us who were yet his Enemies, Enemies that offer'd by Violence to take it from him, how can we content our selves with *doing Good* to those only *who do Good unto us*? this is but faintly, alas! to imitate our Redeemer's Love; *to love those who love us* is no more than what the good Nature of an Heathen will

Luke vi.
33.

will prompt him to; nay, *Sinners also*, for their own Sakes, will *do the same*; but he that would be *merciful*, even as his Master also was *merciful*, must, like him, extend his *Goodness to the Evil* and his *Kindness to the*

1 Cor. 13.

Unthankful; his Charity must *suffer long*, and yet be *kind*; a Charity, like that described by the Apostle, which *beareth all things*, *endureth all things*, and yet that *never fails*; such is the *Love with which Christ loved us*, and with which *we are taught of him to love one another*.

The 2d Thing observable in our Saviour's Manner of doing Good, was his Industry in concealing it; his Modesty still carefully retir'd from the Applause of Men, and seem'd afraid of nothing so much as the Popularity he deserv'd; his constant Charge to those he recover'd was, that they should not tell it unto Men; the Dumb were here commanded to be silent still, and deny'd the Liberty of Speech in proclaiming him from whom they had receiv'd it; his unaffected Charity had no other Design in view but the Glory of God and the Happiness of others, no Reward, but *from his Father only*, which was in *Heaven*, superior far to all the little Arts of Ostentation and Hypocrisy, such as serve only to expose and destroy the Virtue they offer to recommend.

'Tis

'Tis an Argument of a Charity empty as the Applause, and fordid as the Rewards it indecently affects, when it shines only *to be seen of Men*; true disinterested Goodness seeks no other Honour than that which comes from God only, the secret Witness, but the open Rewarder of its Piety; it then maintains the greatest Lustre when it is the most industrious to conceal it; as the Sun, we know, the nearer it approaches to a Meridian Brightness, the less will it suffer it self to be gaz'd at by us, and seems to forbid the Eye that offers to admire it.

I come now in the third place, by proposing some of the principal Encouragements to this Duty, to persuade you, if it may be, to the Practice of it.

And the first I shall mention is the Pleasure and Satisfaction that never fails to attend and follow upon our doing Good.

To do Good and to rejoice are so inseparable the one from the other, that *Epicurus* himself, the most delicate Refiner upon sensual Pleasure, could not but allow it the best Way of improving our Happiness to communicate it; even *Solomon* himself (and never surely was there a more painful Enquirer after Pleasure than he) confesses he had long pursu'd it in vain, and never knew what true Enjoyment was, till at last he found it here; he knew

no Good there was in any of the Riches or the Honours he so plentifully shar'd, *but for a Man to do Good with them in his Life.* And a greater than Solomon could from his own Experience assure us (and yet if any one's Charity could ever want the pleasurable Part of its Reward, our Saviour's surely did) yet even he can tell us, *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Eccl. iii.
12.

Acts xx.
35.

As often as we relieve the Hunger and refresh the Bowels of a distressed Brother, we feed a nobler Appetite of our own, we taste a Relish refin'd above the sensual, and are really more oblig'd to him for the Opportunity, than he can be to us for the Expression of our Charity.

But further, As for all the other sorts of sensual Enjoyments, the Mischief of them is, that they *scarce* out-live the Actions they attend, they presently do vanish, the most innocent of them, in *Vanity*, but the guilty in *Vexation of Spirit*, they falsly desert us in the *needful Time of Trouble*, and serve only to inflame the Anguish they should mitigate and assuage; whereas the Satisfaction of *doing Good* endureth for ever, it faithfully accompanies us into the worst of Fortunes, and wonderfully supports us under them; then when we *walk in the midst of Trouble* (nay, in the *Shadow of Death* it self) even then will this refresh us; then the kind Compassion we have formerly shewn to the Distress of others, will

will mightily lighten the Burden of our own; then *the Blessing of him that was ready to perish* will come seasonably upon us, because we *deliver'd the Poor when he cried, the Fatherless,* Job xxix. 13. *and him that had none to help; in that Day,* when our Riches and our Honours shall lose their wonted Lustre, and the brightest of our Talents, with their dying Master's, languish and decay, then the comfortable Remembrance that we have faithfully employ'd them shall look fresh and flourish, shall stand by and comfort us in the Hour of Death, and plead for us in the Day of Judgment.

But, 2dly,

The Excellency of the Work it self, and the Honour that waits upon doing Good, are none of the least Encouragements to it.

What the Psalmist says of the good and charitable Man, seldom fails to make one Part of his Reward; *he hath dispers'd abroad* (says he) *he hath given to the Poor,* and it naturally follows, that *his Horn shall be exalted* Ps. cxii. 9. *with Honour.*

The World, we may observe, *delights to honour* no Men more than those who are most eminently beneficial to it; 'twas thus the Gods of the Heathen, and with them their Temples too, increas'd, who were nothing else but the real or suppos'd Benefactors of those who at first enshrin'd them. We read, that for restoring a Cripple to his Feet the *Lycaonians* could hardly be restrain'd Acts xiv. 13.

from *doing Sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul*. And it is worth observing too, that it was immediately after Christ's *feeding of the Multitudes* that we find him by his own Disciples first acknowledg'd to be *the Son of God*.

Luke ix.
18.

With how sublime an Image, with how profound a Reverence doth it strike our Minds, when we behold the Man to whom God hath given abundance of Power, and Wisdom, and Reputation, and Estate, above the rest of his Fellow Creatures, generously employing them all to their Advantage, as far surpassing others in the Largeness and Extent of the Good he does as in the Opportunities of doing it? Such an one, like *the River of God*, overflows only that he may enrich; he visits the thirsty Parts of the Earth with refreshing Streams, and carries Gladness and Plenty along with him whithersoever he goes; such an one may be said, in some sense, to supply the Place and do the Work of God in the World, and nobly represents his heavenly Father, the Lord *wise*, only to *direct*, and *mighty*, only to *defend*.

The third and last Encouragement to the Duty of my Text which I shall mention (and what Encouragement can I mention more?) is the Reward annex'd by God himself to the Performance of it.

He

He that hath Pity upon the Poor, (says the Prov. xix. Wife Man) Lendeth unto the Lord, and that^{17.} which he hath giv'n, will he pay him agen. God, in whom the fulness and abundance of all things dwells, is graciously pleas'd to adopt foreign Wants, and personate the Necessities he cannot feel; and yet such is his Goodness, that he will not suffer us to be charitable so much as to himself, without a Consideration: He buys the Tribute of us, which he might exact, and pays us for relieving an Indigence, he vouchsafes to call his own.

Whosoever therefore he be, that hath this Rom. xi. *giv'n unto him, he may depend upon it, it shall^{35.} one time or other be recompenc'd to him agen.* It is more than probable, that even in this Life, *he will receive his own with Usury.* Trust in the Lord, (saith the Psalmist) *and be doing Good,* Pl. xxxviii. *and verily thou shall be fed.* Idleness and Intemperance, Lewdness and Debauchery, nay, and Avarice it self, have impoverish'd many; but I dare boldly say, that no Man's Charity was ever yet known to make him a Beggar in this World: No, we lose, we throw away properly what we mispend upon our Lusts, but our Charity burns without consuming, and scatters only that it may increase: So that Covetousness itself should tempt us to be Charitable, and the greatest Miser in the World, if he did but rightly understand his own Advantage, how little soever he might care to do

do for the sake of others, would yet be bountiful to the Needy for *his own*.

But these, Alas! are but poor trifling Considerations for the Charity of a Christian to dwell upon, unworthy at least, if not unlawful Objects of his Desires. His Love must have respect unto no other Recompence of Reward, but such as like it self, is boundless, and unconfined: Nothing less than Heaven is the Interest, and God's Word the Security, on which he Lends unto the Lord.

Jam. v.
20.

As often as he looks up to Heaven, and there behold that JESUS who suffer'd for his Salvation, exalted most high in the Glory of God the Father, this is such a Prospect indeed, as will make the severest *Labour of Love* appear not only tolerable, but even pleasant, and delightful. *Who shall separate him from the Love of Christ?* What discourage him from following his Master's Charity, once so persecuted, but now so glorify'd, thro' the bitterness of his Sufferings, to the excellency of his Reward?

Once more, and I have done. —

Rom. viii.
35.

If the Charity of otherwise wicked Men, be of force enough, tho' not to excuse them from suffering, yet *by covering a multitude of their Sins*, to abate the Torments they would otherwise endure, how much more, do we think, will it increase the Joys of Heaven to the Spirits of the Just? How will it add to the Pleasures even of that blessed Place, to meet those

those the Partakers of them with us, whom we our selves have been happily instrumental in bringing thither! To remember how *we sav'd* their *Souls from Death*, and rescued them from eternal Misery! How it was *we* that first instructed them in the way to Happiness: How by our charitable Reproof, *we* reclaim'd them from being Evil, how by our better Example, *we* confirm'd them in being Good.

Then will these blessed Spirits thankfully acknowledge the Charity they now no longer can employ, and Christ himself reward whatever we have done unto the least of these, as done unto himself. He will glorify our Love to them with the same Glory, with which he himself also was glorify'd of the Father, for loving us; who because *when he was Rich*, he was yet contented *to become Poor*, that *we thro'* 2 Cor. viii. *his Poverty might be made Rich*, because for our 9. Sakes *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even unto the death of the Cross*, that Phil. ii. 8. *we might live thro' him; therefore hath God also highly exalted him, and given him a Name,* 1 Peter iii. 22. *which is above every Name; Angels, and Principalities, and Powers, being made subject unto him.*

I have now done with the Advantages of this Duty, and am afraid I have already detain'd you too long from the pleasure of performing it. I shall only beg your Patience, whilst I speak a Word or two in the last place,

to

to the Business and Design of this particular Solemnity.

And sure I am, of all the several sorts of Charity I have now been recommending, and by which we may in any wise contribute to the Glory of God, or the Happiness of others, there is none more excellent in it's Nature, or more universal in it's Influence, than that which we are now assembled, you the *GEN-TLEMEN*, that are Trustees of it, to direct, and all of us to Commemorate.

For how can we any way so effectually support the Honour of our God, and the Interests of his Government, as by possessing Men betimes with the Fear of his Name, and a Reverence for his Authority? And when can we hope to do this more successfully, than when their Youth and Tenderness give way to our Impressions, before Vice or Infidelity have got Possession of the Soul, and put the Will and Understanding into a Posture of resisting us? What Method more proper to express good Will towards Men, than by directing them right at first, in the way to Happiness? Than by making *the fear of the Lord the beginning of their Wisdom*? Than by giving them a taste of Moral Good and Evil, as early almost as their Distinction of the Natural?

Greater Love, one would think, *than this* could *no Man* shew, even than to give Life and Being to another: *Greater Love than this*

to

to Children, is religious Education ; a nobler Gift, if possible, even than Life it self, as much as it is nobler to be a Christian than a Man, and to live in Expectation of another World than in Possession of the present.

What a God-like Piece of Charity must it therefore be to *feed the hungry Soul with Goodness*, to provide Instruction for those poor Innocents, who could never of themselves have come to the Knowledge of their Duty ; for those, who had they been unmercifully left and abandon'd to themselves, would but too probably, we may fear, have been betray'd by Idleness into a vicious Life, or forc'd by Necessity upon untimely Death. A Man by such a well plac'd Charity as this, becomes, in some Sense, a Friend and Benefactor to Human Nature itself, by rescuing it from the lowest Contempt it is capable of falling into, and restoring it to the glorious Privileges for which it was design'd.

It gives unto those, who would otherwise have wanted, the Reason of a Man, and the Hopes of a Christian : It fulfils in the best manner that good-natur'd Command of our blessed Saviour himself, by taking up *little* Matt. xix. *Children*, out of the Mire they grovel, and ^{14.} the By-paths they wander in, and *bringing them to Christ*, that he may *lay his Hands on them, and bless them*, and graciously bestow the Kingdom of Heaven upon them, at an Age,

The Duty and Advantages

Age, of all others, the most capable of receiving it.

And then this Charity stops not here, is not confin'd to their Persons only whom it immediately affects, but widely extends its Influence to all the several Interests of the Publick Good. *To the Church it adds daily such as may be saved,* and in Time become successful Instruments in converting others. To the Government it raises up a Sett of Men faithful to its Interests, and useful in their Employments, who would otherwise have prov'd unserviceable at least, if not pernicious Members of the Commonwealth. So great, in one Word, is the *Power of this Love,* as even *out of these Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham,* and Defenders unto Israel.

Matth. iii.
9.

And Lastly (which is indeed a greater Advantage than any I have mention'd) it lays a fair Foundation for a better Age, and more innocent Posterity. For may we not with reason hope, that many of these tender Plants, so advantageously seated by the Well of Life, so bountifully water'd, and so carefully defended, will look fresh and flourish, and one Day make a comely Figure in the House of God? Who knows but *out of the Mouths* of these very *Babes and Sucklings,* as mean and as contemptible as ~~they~~ at present seem, God may one Day *ordain* himself *Strength,* to *still the Enemy,* and silence the Blasphemer, and rebuke

rebuke the Spirit of Faction and Infidelity that prevails amongst us?

Blessings and Peace be on the Heart and Head, and much Glory to God for the Sake of those, *who have thus ministred to the Saints, and yet do minister.* With the Pleasure they deserve, may the good Souls *look back* on this *Labour of their Love, and be satisfied.* May the Praise and the Reward of so excellent a ^{2 C. ix.} _{12.} Charity endure for ever, and may the Administration of this Service not only supply the Wants and answer the Occasions of this particular Assembly, but be more abundant also, by provoking many to a Work so apparently necessary to the Reformation of the present Age, and to the Happiness and Improvement of that which is to follow.



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